**Teen Brains Mini-Unit  
developed by Beth Rimer, NWP Leadership Team  
with adaptations and additions by Tara Clark, Monett Middle School**

**Goals:**

Students will read informational text for specific information.

Students will synthesize texts.

Students will write an informative/argument response.

Students will use and develop source text.

**Day 1: Texts and Reading**

Write into the Day: [YOLO Image](https://i.chzbgr.com/maxW500/6659653888/hA7D6B250/)- What do you see in this image? What do you think of that you don’t see? Spend three minutes writing about this image.

Introduce the word “text”. What is a text? What does it do? How does a text do that? Is this picture a text? It has words, but is it a text by our definition? Why?

What messages did we receive when we looked at the photo? What do we feel this visual is telling us? How do we know what this picture is trying to say? (Using background knowledge to see nerdy clothes, the literal translation of yolo, contradiction to social meme of #yolo, etc.)

What other texts might we discuss in this class, other classes and even in casual conversation?

What skills might we use to “read” a text that isn’t necessarily word-based? What other aspects of a word-based text speak to us? Consider a novel, article, webpage, social media, etc.

Teacher invites students to list five things they think might be true about her based on reading her and her classroom as texts. Students support their claims with evidence. Students share the claims about which they have the most certainty with their shoulder partners. Shoulder partners then do a team share of claims and evidence.

Teacher affirms or denies claims. If there are mistaken claims, it presents the opportunity to talk about the warrants tying together the claims and evidence.

Provide definitions of claim, evidence, and warrant.

Ask the students to bring with them the next day a “text” to “read” so students can learn more about each other. The item should be something small enough to be placed on a desk. Teacher may provide examples.

Exit Pass- Make a claim about the kind of student (friend, daughter, son) you are and consider some items that would represent that claim.

**Day 2: Making Claims**

Write into the Day- Tell what text you brought, the claim it represents, and why.

Gallery Walk- Take a classroom tour to view the texts, thinking about the claims classmates are making. Following the Gallery Walk, students use Stand Up, Hand Up, Pair Up strategy. First partner shows his item, and the other student makes a claim about what that says about his partner and the reasons for his claim. First student affirms or denies. Continue using Pair Up strategy as time permits.

Exit pass- How was it possible to make a claim from a single piece of text? (Addresses warrants)

**Day 3: Writing to an Image**



Write into the Day- What is the claim this image is making about teen brains? What is your response to this image? What do you think about this image as a representation of teenage brains or how teens live their lives?

After 2-3 minutes, ask students to add a “for example, …” to their writing. Share thinking to fill the room with what we already think about teen behavior and brains.

**Day 4: Reading a Video Text** (20-30 minutes) (Note: This piece could be combined with Day 3.) Today, we’ll build on our thinking about teen brains with research and text.

1. Reading Tool- **It Says/ I Say** (modified from Kylene Beers)

Create a two-column chart. As you read/listen, gather two types of information in the “It Says” side: information that explains how the teenage brain works and lines that stick out to you in some way because you have a comment or you disagree or you have an example or it made you think. For now, you will only record in the left side; you will return to “I Say” later.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| It Says | I Say |
|  |  |

2. Watch video called [A Study of the Teenage Brain](http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/29323-tlc-a-study-of-the-teenage-brain-video.htm) and fill in left side of chart. Watch again.

3. Class discussion of thinking: Whip around in table groups or whole class to share something from “It Says,” letting students collect ideas from peers.

Model “I Say” column with one of the shared lines and give students time to add the “I Say” side.

Discuss thinking from “I Say”.

4. Add to writing: Now that we have more information about teen brains, we can add to our writing. Pause to generate a shared list of ways we add information from a source to our writing:

“As \_\_\_\_\_ says,”

“The video text explains…”

“According to …”

“Supporting my example, …”

“Although the video says …”

Return to the writing that was started yesterday and add to it with information or thinking from this source. Remind students to use the sentence frames if they are stuck for how to refer to the video.

Also, ask students to add a “And now I’m thinking / wondering … about teen brains.”

**Day 5: Reading a Written Text** (30-40 minutes)

Add to our thinking and writing about teen brains and how they connect to the choices teens make with more information on teen brains.

1. Reading Tool: VIP notes (modified from *Voices in the Middle* article “Middle School High Five” by Amy Goodman)

As you read, use the three blue Post-it notes to mark words, lines, phrases, sentences or sections that provide more information for understanding how a teen brain works

and

use the three yellow Post-it notes to mark words, lines, phrases, sentences or sections that strike you in some way because you have something to say - it extends, challenges, supports or questions what you already think about teen brains.

[“Brain Immaturity Could Explain Teen Crash Rate”](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A52687-2005Jan31.html)

2. Add to writing: Now that we have even more information about how the teen brain works, we can continue to add to our writing about the connection between teen brains and actions. Pause to add more sentence starters to the shared list of ways we add information from a second source: “In addition,...” “Corroborating …” The article can be referred to as a source of more sentence frames. Remind students to refer to the sentence frames and their Post-its.

Also create a list of key words or phrases that would most likely show up or seem important to use when we are talking about teen brains. These words most likely come from the video and the written text. Gather these words as a word list for students to reference.

3. Make a claim: We’ve collected lots of writing about teen brains - both of your own thinking and that supported by text. Take a few moments to read over all the writing you have done so far and make a claim about teenage brains and the connection between the brain and choices.

Exit slip: Write your claim on an index card.

(Possible extensions to insert here: a lesson on the Harris moves of forwarding and countering or the article [“Teenage Brains Are Malleable and Vulnerable, Researchers Say”](http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/10/16/162997951/teenage-brains-are-malleable-and-vulnerable-researchers-say) . “The teen brain isn’t broken,” says Jay Giedd, which introduces an element of messing around with thinking.)

**Day Six: Drafting** In the last few days, you have gathered material for a claim about teen brains. Writers share thinking in text for a reader - so let’s do that.

Draft a one-pager that presents the way a teen brain works and explores the connection between the teen brain and choices by working through a “guided” essay to get ideas on paper (adapted by Gretchen Bernabei’s 11 minute essay)

For one minute write about teens or brains.

For three minutes write about what you know about the way teen brains work, using the source material you already have.

For three minutes state and then write about your claim, using both the source material you have gathered and a personal example.

For one minute write about one extension or connection this could have for you or your reader: “So, perhaps …” “Now I am wondering, …” “So, next time, …”

Teacher models her essay, highlighting where she has used source material and, if it has previously been taught, identifying where she used the Harris language. Students do the same in their papers.

Individual texts with Word determined grade level readability

1. [Teenage Brain: Debunking the 5 Biggest Myths](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-moshman/adolescents-and-their-tee_b_858360.html) 11.1
2. [Beautiful Brains](http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/10/teenage-brains/dobbs-text) 10.2
3. [Teenage Brains are Malleable and Vulnerable, Researchers Say](http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/10/16/162997951/teenage-brains-are-malleable-and-vulnerable-researchers-say) 11.1
4. [Developmental Psychologist Says Teenagers Are Different](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/01/science/01conv.html?_r=0) 8.1 (their link went to a lesson plan)
5. [Forgetfulness in Teens](http://davidw.edublogs.org/2012/10/15/forgetfulness-in-teens/) (not included in their list) 10.5 infographic [Brain Structures](https://magic.piktochart.com/output/752659-why-teens-forget-part-1), [Forgetful Teen](http://anethicalisland.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/teensforget2.jpg), [How Do I Help?](https://magic.piktochart.com/output/752670-why-teens-forget-part-3),
6. [Your Face Scares Me: Understanding the Hyperrational Adolescent Brain](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/understanding-the-hyperrational-adolescent-brain-todd-finley) 11.5
7. [Adolescence triggers brain — and behavioral — changes that few kids or adults understand](https://student.societyforscience.org/article/teenage-brain) 9.2
8. [Deborah Yurgelun-Todd interview](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/interviews/todd.html) 9.5
9. [Intro to Inside the Teenage Brain Frontline Series](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/view/#rest) 11.8
10. Video: [The Mysterious Workings of the Adolescent Brain](http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_jayne_blakemore_the_mysterious_workings_of_the_adolescent_brain)
11. [The Teenage Brain](https://student.societyforscience.org/article/teenage-brain) 11.8
12. Video: [SciShow The Teenage Brain Explained](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiduiTq1ei8)

An alternate Write into the Day idea - Play Youtube video [“YOLO” by Ida LaFontaine.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX1Qb53yH_k) The singer makes a claim about how to live your life because you only live once. Write about what the singer says and what you believe. How do you live your life?

**Argument Sentence Structure:** “I believe \_\_\_\_\_\_ because I see \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and that means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”